



## **FWINI AGM – 30th March 2023**

**Europa Hotel, Belfast**

### **Welcome**

**FWINI President Lady Anthony Hamilton welcomed everyone to the  
81st AGM of The Federation of Women's Institutes of NI.**

### **Apologies**

- Jean Mann
- Ethel Patterson
- Margaret Collinson
- Lynd Roper – Executive Member
- Closkelt WI
- Tobermore WI
- Ballykelly WI
- Ann Jones – Chair National Federation of WIs
- Aghohill WI

### **Minutes**

Minutes have been circulated and no amendments received. Lady Anthony Hamilton signed the 2022 minutes.

### **Treasurer's Report**

**Sheelagh McRandal, Federation Treasurer**

### **Treasurer's Report**

**Madam President, Madam Chairman, guests and fellow members,**

Good morning, ladies, it is a pleasure to see you all back here in the Europa Hotel for our AGM, with so many of you here it is a sure sign that we are getting back to normal again.

Today, I want to present to you, our latest Financial Statements, to bring you up to date on things that are happening within the Federation and remind you of some issues.

First and foremost, the **Financial Statements** for the Year End 31 August 2022. These were presented to and accepted by the Executive Committee at its meeting on 24 November 2022. Unfortunately, I have to report that they do not make for happy reading with a deficit of £48,907. Even if we take out the exceptional ex gratia payment £15k + £600 solicitors fees, it still leaves us with a deficit of £33,307.

Last year, was another very difficult year, we had major inflation which the Federation was not immune to with insurance, light and heat, water rates etc. all going up. Travel was up from £481 to £6,129 with the Balmoral Show and the Executive and its Sub-Committees meeting in Federation House again, but this is

much less than the 10 to 14 thousands paid in the pre-covid years. We have to thank the Executive and Sub-Committees for continuing, when possible, to hold meetings online and the ability of the members to share lifts and use public transport. Good news is that the magazine numbers increased as did advertising revenue, but increased printing costs wiped out all that good work.

On the income front, membership fees were slightly down as we continued to feel the effects of Covid. There was more bad news on our investment front, with their value dropping by 6.7%. Things have not improved this year with the continuing volatility in the markets compounded by us having to draw down funds to boost the bank account and to cover part of the remedial works to Federation House and the cost of new computers, which were so old they could not be updated nor turned off as it could take them 20 minutes to get them going again! Matters were particularly bad before Christmas as there was a major delay in the annual fees coming in and we were in danger of being overdrawn - over the holiday.

To get back to the membership fees, I am delighted to say this year they show that our membership figures are stabilising, and as of Monday of this week, are standing at 3,579 of which 65.4% are taking the Magazine. We had been very concerned as the number of Institutes has dropped to 129 but you have been working hard recruiting new members and encouraging members from closed Institutes to join you, so we are not losing all these members. Please continue the good work and encourage all your members to take the Magazine, don't be a sharer - at least within the WI.

Balmoral - produced a surplus of £21,658.29, down slightly but most welcome given the problems we had settling into our new premises and competition from more seated cafes. All is set fair for this year and we hope that you will all rally round again, to make it a bumper year.

Of great concern is the auditors, raising doubts about the ability of the Federation to continue as a going concern. We do have sufficient reserves but with a large deficit last year and a projected large loss in this financial year and the uncertainty of the markets, things are not looking good and we also need to do more work in Federation House to ensure that it complies with Building Regulations.

We are working hard to economise; Mary has found a number of areas in which we can do so and we are searching for appropriate grants to apply for. The Sub-Committees are doing their best to ensure that their events break even, and we had the major turnaround in the fortunes of the Home and Garden Christmas Event from a loss last year to a surplus of £3,348 this. Homecraft has held successful schools and money raising events.

This brings me to the contentious and emotive subject of the Homecraft Awards. At the ACM in October, I told you that the cost of these awards, in their present form, is not sustainable and that the time has come to look for other ways of recognising the members work. At present a 9ct gold is £340 and the full circle has gone up to £375 so we have spent £3,095 to meet this year's awards.

In the light of this and our difficult financial situation, the Executive, with much regret, has taken the decision that these must be the last such awards. Members of the Executive Committee have a duty to manage the charity's affairs prudently and take a long term as well as a short-term view. In these straitened financial times for FWINI with income not rising in tandem with costs, the Executive Committee are duty bound to make decisions in the best interests of the charity.

However, in the future should anyone want to purchase an award in this present form, they may do so through Federation House. The Homecraft Sub-Committee will give details of the proposed replacement awards. As an Executive colleague said:

"Surely the real reward of learning 6, 12 or 25 different crafts should be a 'sense of achievement', that can be acknowledged in a way that allows funds raised to be used for the benefit of all members, not just some."

And now, some news of our accountants and auditors, Maurice Dawson of Dawson & Company who has served the Federation well for many years is retiring and his company is merging with MB McGrady and Company. We have taken this opportunity to review the provision of our accountancy services and asked three firms of accountants to quote for them. Only one, McGrady, replied. Their quote was slightly less than

what we had been paying and as we would be working with the same staff as previously, although with a different engagement partner, the Executive recommends that MB McGrady and Company be appointed as our auditors.

A few other matters:

Once again, I would like to remind you about **the WI Handbook**. It is an invaluable resource, giving you details of governance of the Federation and such topics as the running of your Institute, Insurance, finance, etc - a handy go to. I would encourage you all to have copies to hand in your President, Secretary and Treasurer's bags and refer to them regularly. We have brought some for the sales table to help you.

**Notes to All Treasurers** continues as a regular feature on page 4 of the Magazine, with reminders and topical hints to help Treasurers through the year. At least one of many good reasons for buying the Magazine.

I have been making in-roads into the updating of the **Annual Financial Statements**, in response to your complaints, I had hoped to finish it for this year but there have been so many other matters that it has been delayed, for which I apologise. I have been working through your returns and find that they are mostly of a very high standard and Treasurers that you have coped better than you thought with them, but we can make them easier for you to complete.

A quick word on **Institute returns to Federation House**, over the past few years we have been slipping a little but now that we are back to normal, will you please make sure that you return all the information and payments that we ask for, completely and on time. Members fees must always be in by 15 December, this year we had a cash flow problem and many members not insured until we received the fees. An Institute's Annual Financial Statements should be presented, audited and signed, to its AGM, then given to the attending Executive Member or posted immediately to Federation House. The last AGMs are in October so by November we should have them all. There are other documents and requests that out during the year so please I ask you to return them fully completed and on time.

As ever we have the Sales Table with our usual items for sale, new this year is a very elegant pen and a tote bag. Please browse and buy.

Finally, we are indebted to our insurers, Towergate, Dawson Whyte for a donation towards our expenses today. And we would also ask you to help. Many of you have asked why we don't charge an entry fee to the AGM. You do not pay to attend an AGM but, if you would like to make a voluntary donation of say £5.00, we would gratefully accept it. There is a box at the entrance. Don't say that we do not listen to you.

Before I finish, I must thank our loyal and hard-working staff for all their help. It has not been an easy year, but Kathleen and Caroline have been unstinting in their dedication to the WI. Mary joined us six months ago and has had made a great difference to our lives, she was thrown in the deep end, but no challenge has been too hard for her. A big thank you to the three of you, we can't do without you all.

**Madam President, that concludes my report, and it gives me great pleasure to propose the adoption of the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 August 2022 and the appointment of MB McGrady and Company as our accountants and auditors.**

**Sheelagh McRandal**  
**Federation Treasurer**

**Seconding the Financial Report**

**Brenda Richardson, Rowallane Area Executive**

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**Federation Chairman's Report**

**Lady Anthony, Honoured Guests, Executive Members and my fellow members,**

Ladies, they say time flies when you are enjoying yourself and I must be enjoying myself as I am now entering into the final year of my term as Chairman and I do not know where that time has gone.

Last year was very special with all our 90th Anniversary events. Feedback from them has been very positive with requests that we do some of them again. The final event – the decorated Christmas tree with the knitted items donated to The Salvation Army and St. Vincent de Paul – was so successful the charities have asked us to repeat it again this year. We are considering all the requests and may be able to accommodate some of them.

2022 brought in many changes, not least in ACWW. These changes have brought with them concerns, complaints and controversy. ACWW brought in some sweeping changes that have brought disquiet to many faithful supporters, both here and further afield. Northern Ireland WIs have always been one of the major financial backers of ACWW Projects throughout the world, we are well known for our generosity. We on the Executive and International Sub-Committee are monitoring developments as they arise but are leaving the monetary support up to each individual Institute. The change to the funding of Projects has caused disquiet, however, I would urge you to go onto the ACWW website and read the Projects being supported in 2023. There are 15 Projects, including empowering vulnerable women and girls, economic empowerment for single mothers through training in agriculture and nutrition, and economic empowerment for survivors of domestic violence across Uganda, Mongolia, India, Papua New Guinea and Togo, all in partnership with local agencies.

I have just returned from a visit to the United Nations in New York and have been able to see for myself the work that ACWW does to further the cause of rural women worldwide and the esteem with which it is held by the International community. In May I am heading off to Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia for the 30th Triennial Conference. Reports on both of these will be given at the World Women's Rural Day in October 2023.

The Covid-19 pandemic caused mayhem with many of the membership organisations – in particular a severe loss of revenue and members. The WI is no exception to this, we were unable to hold our major fundraiser, the Balmoral Show, for two years, our membership fees plummeted and our membership itself dropped.

We are coming out of the tunnel – those of you who read the magazine will have been heartened by the number of new members joining and our membership is now holding steady. The Balmoral Show is back up and running and we are planning an even better representation this year, but our finances are still not in great shape. Everyone is feeling the pinch of the economic downturn with prices rising in every sector. We have therefore had to take some unpopular decisions – the rise in fees, and the change of badges for the Homecraft awards – and these have not been taken lightly. There have been discussions, looking at alternatives, more discussion and decisions made – if we are to survive financially these measures are not just necessary, they are essential. We are looking at other ways to try to cut costs and boost our income – grants, sponsorship, etc. – but even these are getting harder to obtain with more and more organisations seeking help.

I am sure you are thinking that with all my travels I am not helping our financial situation, but rest assured that, while I do claim some travel expenses, many trips are funded by the Institutes/organizations who have invited me and many, including my New York trip, are fully funded by myself. I am not wealthy, but I feel that in my position it is very important to represent the Federation in as many areas as I can.

Since the Autumn Council meeting in October, I have attended 60th Anniversaries for Maze and Hillsborough, presented prizes at the Festival of the Spoken Word, the Arts Coffee Morning and the Bowls Final, joined Kathleen Verner and Sheelagh McRandal laying a wreath at the City Hall, visited Derbyshire to speak about my Romania Trip, attended the Home and Garden Christmas event at the City Hotel in Armagh and then with Sheelagh and Sandra Ledlie delivered the knitted items to The Salvation Army and

St. Vincent de Paul at Sydenham, joined with Woman's Spaces to celebrate the role played by women in The Good Friday Agreement, and spent a week in New York at the United Nations for the Commission on the Status of Women – an uplifting, humbling and informative experience.

Tomorrow, Kathleen Verner and I will represent the WI at the Ulster Famer's Union dinner in Cookstown. We are also hoping to join with the Executive Office at Stormont to further the strategy on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls. This violence, whether it is domestic, murder, rape, sexual assault, trafficking or digital, is a scourge on our society and as one of the biggest women's organisations in Northern Ireland we need our voices to be heard. Rural women in particular are known to suffer in silence and we need to ensure they know of organisations that can help.

At the UN I listened to women in Island countries such as Barbados, Trinidad & Tobago, Tonga and Fiji speak about their concerns with Climate Change and Global Warming at the UN and realised that for them it was not just a concern but a life-threatening situation. I am glad therefore that the Home and Garden Sub-Committee are continuing to give us useful hints and tips – these may seem like a small effort but if everyone does their bit it will have a much bigger effect.

We are trying to modernise the WI, make it more sustainable, more user friendly and more up-to-date, but we are not going to throw the baby out with the bath water, we must retain our ideals, our aims and objectives and all that is good about WI – the friendship, fun and good works. We realise that not everyone is technology savvy, that connections in different parts of the province are not good, that some people like to have paper forms or information and that is fine. A phone call to HQ will get you whatever you need in paper format posted out.

Finally, I would like to thank my Executive, you have been wonderful, your help and understanding and even the disputes – it is not a proper discussion if everyone just agrees! Thanks also to our very hardworking Sub-Committees under their Chairmen who do a wonderful job organising events, festivals, workshops, etc. to showcase the diverse array of talents our members have. Special mention of Kathleen Verner, my right-hand woman, always there with helpful advice and to deputise when I have to be two places at once, and to Sheelagh – with finances tight she has kept us on the straight and narrow – no easy job!

Our fantastic Office Staff – Mary who has fitted in very well and is doing a sterling job looking for funding, trying to cut costs and bring the office management up-to-date. To Kathleen, a fount of knowledge and always friendly and helpful, where would we be without her, and Caroline who brings us a magazine that is the envy of all (I have been asked to send it over to Canada as they have nothing to compare!) and keeps us informed of all the goings on through Facebook. Your work over this past six months has been exemplary and we very much value you all. And you the membership, I have been treated royally everywhere I have gone, and I very much appreciate your friendship. I look forward to meeting many of you at Balmoral Show – don't forget to send goodies, offer help and enter the competitions – all will be much appreciated.

**Lady Anthony this concludes my report.**

**Margaret Broome  
Federation Chairman**

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## Resolutions

### **1. Membership Fees – Adopted**

After much consideration, the Executive Committee proposes that the Federation fees be increased from £15.00 to £20.00 with effect from 1 September 2023. This is to ensure the sustainability of the Federation of Women's Institutes of NI in the face of yearly rising costs and the current exceptional national financial situation caused by the pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

It is also proposed that the fees are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they keep pace with costs.

Proposed: Sheelagh McRandal, Federation Treasurer

Seconded: Marie Darrah, Lisnagarvey Area Executive

### **2. Limited Company – Rejected**

The Executive Committee proposes that the Federation changes its legal status and becomes a Limited Company. This would ensure that the Trustees are not personally liable if something goes wrong, provided they have acted within the law and reasonably, and comply with the requirements of some funders.

Proposed: Sheelagh McRandal, Federation Treasurer

Seconded: Rosemary Savage, Roe Valley Area Executive

### **3. Ending Violence Against Women and Girls – Adopted**

The Northern Ireland Executive has directed that a Strategy to End Violence Against Women and Girls be developed. The FWINI Executive Committee proposes that FWINI, as the largest women's organisation in NI, actively support the NI Executive with the actions identified by this strategy.

Proposed: Ruth Carroll, Ranfurly Area Executive

Seconded: Teresa Feeney, Londonderry Executive Committee

### **4. Lift the Ban that prevents Asylum Seekers from working in NI – Adopted**

To allow refugees and asylum seekers permission to work during the asylum process in Northern Ireland. The skills and talents of asylum seekers could be used to enable them to contribute to the labour market.

Proposed: Gail Ewan & Anne Graham, Moneyrea WI

Seconded: Gillian McBride, Newtownbreda WI

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## Afternoon Session

### Greetings

- The Rt, Hon. the Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Christina Black
- Christine Adams President – Royal Ulster Agricultural Society
- Peter Alexander President – Young Farmers Clubs of Ulster
- William Irvine Deputy President – Ulster Farmers' Union
- Anne Kerr President – Scottish Women's Institutes
- Hilda Roche National President – Irish Country Women's Association
- Diana Thompson Chairman – Women's Forum NI
- Kay Simpson Northern Ireland Chair – Townswomen's Guilds

### Guest Speaker – Adrian Morrow – Managing Director, Glenarm Castle



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### Presentations of Awards –

**Lady Anthony Hamilton, Federation President**

**Kathleen Verner, Federation Vice-Chairman**

<b>HEMOCRAFT:</b>	
<b>Eileen McCoubrey Cup</b> (Traditional white embroidery)	<b>Anne Martin, Ballievey WI</b>
<b>Seapark Salver</b> (Best entry by a newly enrolled member)	<b>Kerrie Mumford, Ballyblack WI</b>
<b>Olive Kane Cup</b> (Wool embroidery)	<b>Diana Thompson, Ballyclare WI</b>
<b>Roe Valley Trophy</b> (Full Circle holders)	<b>Evelyne Robinson, Ballymoney WI</b>
<b>Dromore Scroll</b> (New guild member with highest number of A+)	<b>Joanne Campbell, Ballymoney WI</b>
<b>Clanabogan Cup</b> (Team knitting)	<b>Ballymoney WI – Joanne Campbell, Tanya Everett &amp; Heather McConaghie</b>

<b>Doreen Dawson Cup</b> (Team entry of 3 different crafts)	<b>Ballymoney WI – Joanne Campbell, Tanya Everett &amp; Heather McConaghie</b>
<b>Janet Jones Trophy</b> (Modern or unusual craft not included in the Homecraft Syllabus)	<b>Ruth Watt, Broughshane WI</b>
<b>Coey I Cup</b> (Coloured embroidery)	<b>Sheelagh McRandal, Drumbeg WI</b>
<b>Thelma Goldring Trophy</b> (Best individual item)	<b>Sheelagh McRandal, Drumbeg WI</b>
<b>Etta Stewart Cup</b> (Best entry of craftwork exclusive of cup winning entries)	<b>Elizabeth McKinty, Gleno WI</b>
<b>Coey II Cup</b> (Embroidery)	<b>Gwen Henson, Kells &amp; Connor WI</b>
<b>Greenisland Cup</b> (Institute gaining the greatest number of grade A awards in proportion to the number of members during the year)	<b>Kilrea WI</b>
<b>Hilda Stewart Trophy</b> (Best entry of Limerick or Carrickmacross lace)	<b>Marilla McAuley, Larne WI</b>
<b>Isobel Lusk Cup</b> (Knitting)	<b>Mary Walker, Loughgall WI</b>
<b>Emily Bossence Tray</b> (Gold award holders)	<b>Nancy Wharry, Mossley WI</b>
<b>Emily Blair Trophy</b> (For the disadvantaged)	<b>Jane Laverick, Newtownbreda WI</b>
<b>GOLD SPINNING WHEEL WINNERS:</b>	
<b>Ray Turner, Ballymoney WI</b>	
<b>Pamela Robinson, Carrickfergus WI</b>	
<b>Myrna Douglas, Cullybackey WI</b>	
<b>Kathleen Kennedy, Cullybackey WI</b>	
<b>Iris Ingram, Fourtowns WI</b>	
<b>Betty Graham, Kilrea WI</b>	
<b>Babs Bassett, Spa WI</b>	
<b>FULL CIRCLE WINNERS:</b>	
<b>Helen McVicker, Armoy WI</b>	
<b>David Irvine, Moira WI</b>	

<b>INTERNATIONAL:</b>	
<b>Mary Boyd Trophy</b> (Mary Boyd Competition 2022 – Upcycling theme: ‘Repurpose a used item of clothing into something new to wear.’ – <b>1st Place</b> )	<b>Jennifer Skelly, Moneyrea WI</b>
<b>Margaret McMillan Bowl</b> – (Mary Boyd Competition 2022 – <b>2nd Place</b> )	<b>Christina Haycock, Newtownbreda WI</b>



<b>MAGAZINE AND LEISURE:</b>	
<b>Mourne Cup</b> (Best poem written by a WI member published in the <i>Ulster Countrywoman</i> magazine during the previous calendar year)	<b>Daphne Wylie, Pomeroy WI</b>
<b>Quoile Trophy</b> (Best overall <i>Ulster Countrywoman</i> magazine cover photograph published during the previous calendar year)	<b>Wilma Buick, Kells &amp; Connor WI</b>
<b>Phyllis Gailey Trophy</b> (Literary Competition – <b>1st Place</b> )	<b>Lorraine Girvan, Downpatrick WI</b>
<b>Waringstown Cup</b> (Scrapbook Competition – <i>Open class</i> – <b>1st Place</b> )	<b>Broughshane WI</b>
<b>Crystal Cup</b> (Scrapbook Competition – <i>Front Cover class</i> – <b>1st Place</b> )	<b>Mosside WI</b>
<b>Crystal Cup</b> (Scrapbook Competition – <i>Single Page class</i> – <b>1st Place</b> )	<b>Mosside WI</b>

**Vote of thanks – Norma Heap, Derrygonnelly WI, Erne Area**

**Flowers – Drumbeg WI**

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